

3. Repurposing Commercial Games for Education

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Parcelling Out The Terrain

Why are you using a game?

- Do you want to:
 - Provide domain-specific content?
 - Provide domain-specific analytic and problem-solving approaches?
 - Enhance skill transfer to related tasks or domains?
 - Enhance general skills or cognitive processes?
 - Develop specific social structures?
 - Improve participant motivation?

Commercial games answer...

- If you want to:
 - Provide domain-specific content
 - Weak – few commercial games are solid in this regard
 - Provide domain-specific analytic and problem-solving approaches
 - OK – critical gaming is essential here
 - Enhance skill transfer to related tasks or domains
 - OK to Strong – will generally involve secondary aspects of game, task/ domain
 - Enhance general skills or cognitive processes
 - OK to Strong – need careful research
 - Develop specific social structures
 - Weak – structures tend not to map usefully from game to course needs
 - Improve participant motivation
 - Weak to OK – relevance, effectiveness need to be gauged carefully

Particularly Interesting Categories

- Interactive Fiction
 - Narrative structure analysis
- Role-playing Games
 - Dramatic structures, narrative building support, derived media creation
- MMOGs
 - Narrative building support, derived media creation, Social Sciences research
- ARGs
 - Narrative building support, media literacy
- Sims
 - Systems modeling, statistical analysis, research methodologies
- Real-Time Strategy Games
 - Modeling, decision optimization
- Turn-based World Strategy Games
 - Historical assumptions and causality analysis
- Twitch Games
 - Dexterity skills, spatial perception

An Approach to Critical Gaming

Key Elements

- Establish what the game is attempting to represent
- Establish how it's doing it
- Determine its successes
- Determine its shortcomings and their sources:
 - Technical limits
 - Game fun limits
 - Conceptual limits
- Propose remedies for the shortcomings
- Propose ways to further investigate the game

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